

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 TEL AV 02991 160446Z

20

ACTION IO-10

INFO OCT-01 NEA-09 ISO-00 SR-02 ORM-01 AID-05 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AF-06 ARA-06 EA-06 EUR-12

TRSE-00 OMB-01 ABF-01 /104 W
----- 048287

R 151504Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6697

AMEMBSSY BEIRUT

INFO AMEMBSSY AMMAN

AMEMBSSY CAIRO

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 2991

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS:UNRWA, PFOR, SREF, IS, EG,XF

SUBJECT: GAZA AND THE UNRWA FUNDING PROBLEM.

REF: BEIRUT 6111

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: DIRECTOR OF UNRWA/GAZA FORESEES RELATIVELY MINOR DISTURBANCES SHOULD AGENCY SERVICES BE CUTBACK,BUT ONE OF HIS SENIOR STAFF MEMBERS BELIEVES SITUATION COULD BE WORSE. ISRAELI AUTHORITIES ARE PREPARED TO FILL SERVICES GAP IF NECESSARY AND FORESEE NO SERIOUS PROBLEM. IT IS DIFFICULT TO PREDICT REACTION TO CUTBACKS IN GAZA, BUT ANY CHANGE IN EXISITING SITUATION WILL REDUCE TO SOME DEGREE ROLE OF UNRWA AS BUFFER BETWEEN ISRAELI AUTHORITIES AND REFUGEE POPULATION.
END SUMMARY.

2. WE DISCUSSED IMPLICATIONS FOR GAZA OF POSSIBLE CUTBACK IN UNRWA SERVICES MAY QE WITH DIRECTOR OF UNRWA OFFICE IN GAZA(GEANEY), WHO HAD JUST RETURNED FROM BEIRUT AND
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CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 TEL AV 02991 160446Z

MEETINGS WITH COMGEN. GEANEY SAID THAT SHOOULD CUTBACKS

BECOME NECESSARY ONLY REALISTIC ALTERNATIVES IN GAZA, AS ELSEWHERE, WOULD BE REDUCTION IN RATIONS, TERMINATION OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION PROGRAM, OR COMBINATION OF BOTH. THESE WERE ONLY AREAS WHERE SUBSTANTIAL SAVINGS IN OPERATIONAL EXPENSES COULD BE FOUND.

3. GEANEY SAID THAT REDUCTION IN SERVICES WOULD PROBABLY LEAD TO DISTURBANCES, BUT ADDED HE ASSUMED THAT ISRAELIS WOULD NOT ALLOW SITUATION TO GET OUT OF HAND. IN HIS OPINION, ISRAELIS WOULD BE ABLE, INDEED EAGER, TO ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR WHATEVER SERVICES UNRWA WOULD HAVE TO CURTAIL. (GEANEY HAS LONG HELD VIEW THAT GOI CONSIDERS UNRWA SERVICES AS AT BEST REDUNDANT IN GAZA). HE EXPRESSED CONCERN IN THAT SITUATION FOR UNRWA STAFF, ESPECIALLY TEACHERS, MOST OF WHOM WOULD HAVE NO ALTERNATIVE BUT TO ACCEPT UNDESIRABLE ROLE AS EMPLOYEES OF MILITARY GOVERNMENT.

4. IN SEPARATE CONVERSATION, SENIOR MEMBER OF INTERNATIONAL STAFF (WHO IS IN CLOSER CONTACT THAN GEANEY WITH CAMP ADMINISTRATORS) EXPRESSED SOMEWHAT MORE CONCERN OVER PROBABLE LOCAL REACTION TO CUTBACK IN SERVICES. ADMITTING THAT ECONOMIC SITUATION OF MANY REFUGEES ELIMINATED OBJECTIVE NEED FOR RATIONS, HE SAID IT WAS UNFORTUNATE FACT THAT MOST HAD COME TO VIEW THEIR RATION AS AN "ACQUIRED RIGHT." IN HIS VIEW, THEIR FEELING THAT INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY WAS RENEGING ON ITS "COMMITMENT" WOULD BE COMPOUNDED IN GAZA CASE--IF MILITARY GOVERNMENT STEPS INTO BREACH AS EXPECTED--BY BELIEF THAT THEIR FUTURE WAS BEING HANDED OVER TO ISRAELIS. MOREOVER, ACCORDING TO STAFFER, MILITARY GOVERNMENT WILL PROBABLY BE FAIRLY SEVERE IN DROPPING RELATIVELY WELL-OFF FAMILIES COMPLETELY FROM RATION ROLLS, IF ONLY BECAUSE OF GOI'S OWN BUDGETARY CONSTRAINTS.

5. SAME SENIOR STAFF MEMBER ALSO BELIEVES THAT ELIMINATION OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION COULD CARRY RISK OF SERIOUS DISTURBANCES IN GAZA CONTEXT. WHILE WILLING HIMSELF TO GIVE ISRAELIS HIGH MARKS FOR MAINTAINING PREVIOUSLY EXISTING SYSTEM AT SECONDARY LEVEL, HE CLAIMS BELIEF IS WIDESPREAD AMONG REFUGEES THAT ISRAELIS WILL PUT CONTROL OF PRIMARY

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 TEL AV 02991 160446Z

EDUCATION TO PROPAGANDISTIC USE AMONG YOUNGER STUDENTS. HE TOLD US THAT RUMORS TO THIS EFFECT WERE ALREADY MAKING ROUNDS OF CAMPS AS RESULT OF ARTICLE IN MAY 11 ISSUE OF EAST JERUSALEM DAILY EL-QUDS, WIDELY READ IN GAZA, REPORTING PROBABLY CUTBACK IN UNRWA SERVICES, INCLUDING ELEMENTARY EDUCATION.

6. MILITARY GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL (LIRAN) CONFIRMED TO US

THAT GOI IS PREPARED TO TAKE OVER ANY SERVICES UNRWA IS FORCED TO ELIMINATE. HE SAID HE PERSONALLY WOULD CONSIDER THIS AN UNFORTUNATE DEVELOPMENT BUT FORSAW NO MAJOR PROBLEMS. IN IMPLEMENTING SUCH A CHANGE IF GOI GIVE SUFFICIENT NOTICE. ONLY PROBLEM IN EDUCATIONAL FIELD, LIRAN BELIEVES, WILL BE QUESTION OF OWNERSHIP OF SCHOOL BUILDINGS. HE FEELS PALESTINAIANS PLACE SUFFICIENTLY HIGH PREMIUM ON EDUCATION OF THEIR CHILDREN TO PRECLUDE LIKELIHOOD OF DISRUPTIONS SUCH AS STUDENT BOYCOTTS. (HE DID NOT ADDRESS SUBJECT OF TEACHER EMPLOYMENT). REGARDING THEM, HE FRANKLY STATED THAT MAJORITY OF REFUGEES IN GAZA DID NOT REQUIRE THEM, AND POINTED OUT THAT AUTHORITIES HAD MEANS (EMPLOYMENT RECORDS, AUTO REGISTRATIONS, ETC.) BY WHICH TO ASSURE THAT AVAILABLE COMMODITIES REACHED NEEDIEST FAMILIES.

7. COMMENT: GEANEY TOLD US HE BELIEVES THAT COMGEN, FOR POLITICAL REASONS, WOULD HAVE TO MAKE WHATEVER CUTS PROVE TO BE NECESSARY IN ACROSS-THE-BOARD FASHION AND WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO TAKE CIRCUMSTANCES OF EACH COUNTRY INTO ACCOUNT. WE HOPE THIS IS NOT NECESSARILY THE CASE AND WERE PLEASED TO SEE (REFTEL) THAT ONE OPTION BEING PRESENTED TO ADCOM INVOLVED RECOGNITION OF SPECIAL NATURE OF WEST BANK AND GAZA SITUATIONS, WHERE "HOST GOVERNMENT IS IN FACT ISRAELI MILITARY GOVERNMENT. IMPLICATIONS OF THIS SITUATION WOULD SEEM TO US TO BE ESPECIALLY PRONOUNCED IN GAZA, WHERE REFUGEES CONSTITUTE MAJORITY OF POPULATION.

8. IT IS DIFFICULT FOR US TO FORESEE HOW SERIOUS ANY DISTURBANCES IN GAZA MIGHT BE AS RESULT OF REDUCTION IN UNRWA SERVICES. REFUGEES WOULD BE FRUSTRATED BUT ISRAELI AUTHORITIES WILL BE PREPARED, AND END RESULT WILL PROBABLY DEPEND TO LARGE EXTENT ON ATMOSPHERE IN CAMPS AT TIME. WHAT IS CLEAR IS THAT REFUGEE POPULATION WILL BE BROUGHT INTO CLOSER D

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PAGE 04 TEL AV 02991 160446Z

AILY
CONTACT WITH ISRAELI AUTHORITIES THAN HAS BEEN CASE HERETOFORE, THUS CHANGING SITUATION IN WHICH UNRWA ON NEARLY ALL MATTERS HAS ACTED AS BUFFER BETWEEN REFUGEES AND GOI.
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